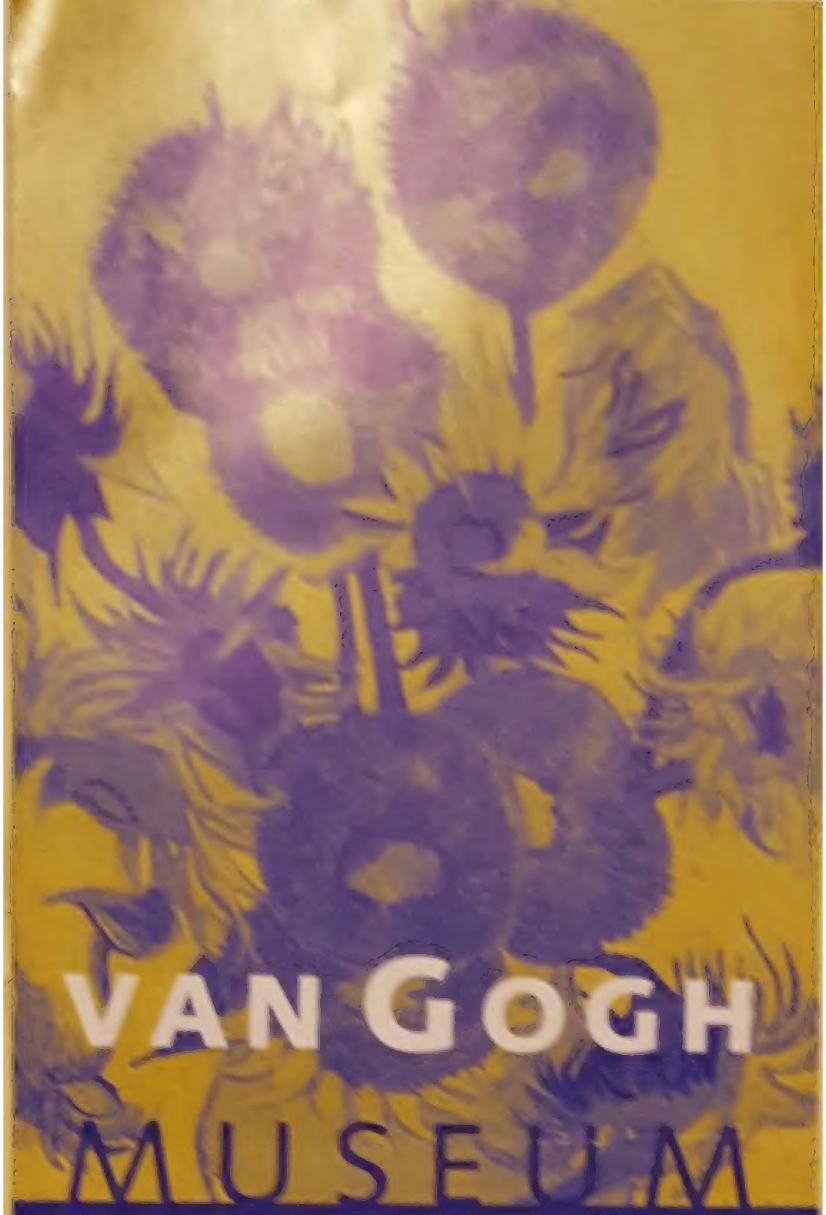


VAN GOGH MUSEUM

Welcome to the Van Gogh Museum

You are now in the museum with the world's largest collection of works by Vincent van Gogh: more than 200 paintings, 500 drawings and 700 letters. The museum also houses an extensive collection of works of art by other 19th–century painters and sculptors. You will find the permanent collection in the main building. The exhibition wing backing on to Museumplein (Museum Square) offers a wide range of exhibitions related to 19th–century art.

an overview

Another important source of inspiration was Japanese woodcuts, of which he made his own collection. In some paintings Van Gogh has actually imitated these prints; in other works their influence is visible in unusual compositions, powerful colours and strong contours.

Arles

In February 1888, tired of the bustle of Parisian life and in search of warmth and tranquillity, Van Gogh moved to the southern French town of Arles. He sought inspiration from the landscape and light of the south and – as in the Netherlands – rural life. He painted the blossoming fruit trees and the cornfields just outside town. His ambition was still to be a real figure painter and, after some searching, he was able to find people that were willing to pose for him.

Van Gogh hoped to establish an artists' colony with his friend Paul Gauguin and other painters in the 'Yellow House' which he rented from May 1888. He painted his famous still-lifes with sunflowers, and other works, to decorate the house. After a great deal of persuasion, Gauguin finally arrived in October. However, towards the end of the year, the first signs of Van Gogh's mental illness began to appear, probably a form of epilepsy that took the form of delusions and psychotic attacks. It was during one of these seizures that Van Gogh cut off his left earlobe. Gauguin made a hasty departure and Van Gogh's dreams of founding an artist's colony disappeared.

Saint-Rémy

After recurrent attacks of his illness, Van Gogh decided to admit himself to a mental health clinic in Saint-Rémy, near Arles, in April 1889. The doctor who was treating him eventually gave him permission to carry on with his work. Van Gogh drew and painted the world around him: the corridors, rooms and patients at the clinic, the garden and the view from the window. If his health was up to it he was allowed to work outside the clinic grounds. There he produced landscapes with cypress and olive trees, using lively brush strokes that suggest movement and energy. The colour schemes were generally somewhat softer and less brilliant than in the paintings he had done in Arles. If he was not feeling well enough to work outside, Van Gogh concentrated on other subjects. He studied reproductions by famous masters like Millet, Rembrandt and Delacroix. He copied these prints whilst adding his own personal style and colours. Between bouts of illness he had very productive periods in which masterpieces like *Wheatfield with a reaper* and *Irises* were created.

Auvers-sur-Oise

Van Gogh was keen to leave the clinic and to go back north. In May 1890 he settled in Auvers-sur-Oise, an artist's village close to Paris. He became very friendly with Paul Gachet, a doctor who was also an amateur painter and art collector. Gachet helped Van Gogh if he needed medical advice and taught him etching techniques, whilst in return Van Gogh made various portraits of his eccentric friend and his daughter.

Van Gogh was extremely enthusiastic about his new surroundings: '[...] for really it is profoundly beautiful, it is the real country, characteristic and picturesque' he wrote in a letter to Theo. Inspired by the vineyards, the old houses with thatched roofs and the cornfields, he made a great number of drawings and paintings in a very short period of time, culminating in a series of panoramic landscapes including *Wheatfield with crows*.

Despite his productivity and the first signs that his work was appreciated, Van Gogh was often extremely depressed during those last weeks in Auvers. Theo, whose salary had to support his own family, his artist brother and his mother, was considering leaving his steady job and setting up in business for himself.

Vincent was unsure what the future would hold for them all and wrote to Theo that he felt he was a burden on him and his family.

On 27 July 1890 Van Gogh shot himself in the chest and two days later died from his wounds, with his brother beside him at his deathbed. Theo died six months later. The brothers are buried side by side in the graveyard of Auvers-sur-Oise.

Vincent van Gogh

When Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) decided to become an artist, no one, not even he, suspected that he had extraordinary gifts.

His evolution from an inept but impassioned novice into a truly original master was remarkably rapid: all the works which you will see here were produced in the space of just ten years. In that time Van Gogh made well over 800 paintings, more than 1000 drawings, as well as sketches and water-colours.

Van Gogh himself provided a moving account of his artistic revolution in the letters he wrote to his family and friends, in particular to his brother Theo. Many of these have survived and they give us valuable information about what he read, saw and thought.

As a painter, he was largely self-taught. With the help of text books, a number of lessons at the art academies of Brussels and Antwerp, visits to museums and advice from artist-friends, he became familiar with traditional practices. His introduction to modern French art movements encouraged him to experiment. As years went by he developed his own, highly distinctive style of painting – using expressive brushstrokes and vivid colours, which has since inspired many generations of artists.

After Van Gogh's death there was a great deal of interest in the artist's work, and almost as much fascination for his dramatic life story with its unhappy romances, apparent lack of recognition, illness and suicide.

The Netherlands

In 1880 Vincent van Gogh decided to become an artist. He was 27 years old at the time and had already been employed in a series of professions, as a lay preacher, a schoolmaster and an art dealer, none of which had proved a great success. When he was starting out as an artist he used to practice by drawing landscapes, townscapes and, above all, drawing after a live model. He lived first in Brussels, then in Etten (with his parents) and from late 1881 in The Hague. It was there that he was given a few lessons by Anton Mauve, his cousin by marriage. His unorthodox relationship with Sien Hoornik, a pregnant, unmarried woman with a young daughter, alienated him from both Mauve and his parents.

In September 1883, Van Gogh broke off his relationship with Sien and went to Drenthe to paint landscapes and scenes depicting farmers at work. Van Gogh stayed less than three months in this remote province in the northeast of the Netherlands. Loneliness and the lack of materials and models drove him back to his parents, who in the meantime had moved to the village of Nuenen in Brabant.

In Nuenen, Van Gogh concentrated on depicting weavers behind their looms and farmers at work. Just like his much-admired

predecessor Jean-François Millet (1814–1875), the famous French painter of peasant subjects, he wanted to represent the life of these simple, hard-working people. He also depicted the local landscape in his paintings and drawings, rendering it in dark, sombre colours.

In the winter of 1884–1885 Van Gogh painted more than 40 studies of the heads of farmers and farmers' wives, trying to capture their characteristic features. This series was a preparation for his first large figure piece: *The potato eaters* (April 1885). The artist's intention was to make a very realistic 'peasant painting', without glamorising their life. In order to show what he was capable of he chose a difficult composition for his figure piece. He had hoped his work would bring him success but instead it yielded only criticism.

In late 1885 Van Gogh went to Antwerp for a few months to take a course on figure painting at the Antwerp Academy of Art. His brother Theo, who had already been working for a number of years as an art dealer in Paris, had been writing him such interesting letters about the latest developments in art in the French capital that Vincent went to see for himself the following spring.

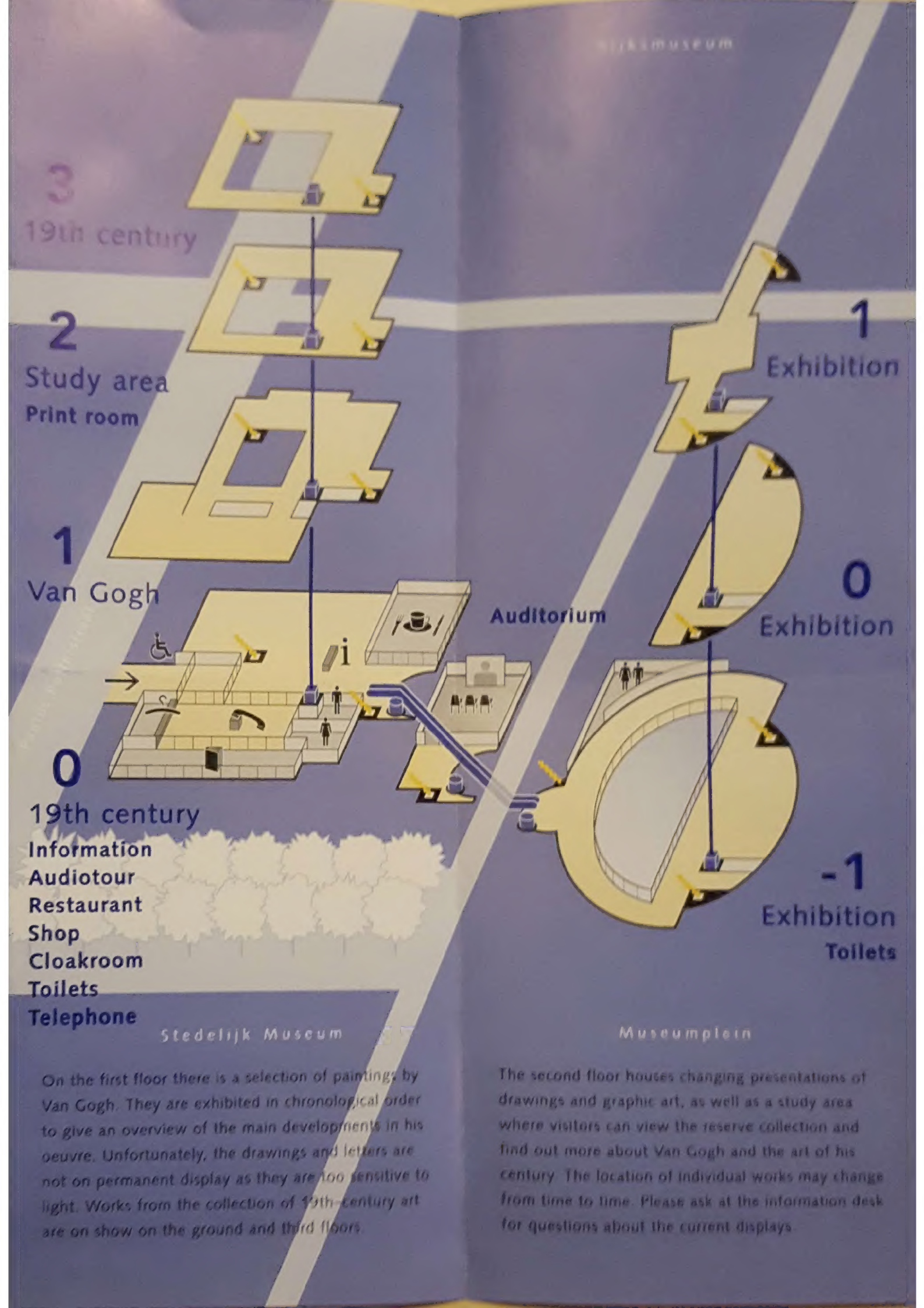
Paris

Van Gogh's Parisian period was one of study, renewal and experiment. From the spring of 1886 he lived with his brother in the artist's district Montmartre. He made studies of plaster figures and drawings after a live model for a few months at the studio of the academic French artist Fernand Cormon. It was there that he met kindred spirits among the young artists, including Paul Signac and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

In the two years he stayed in Paris Van Gogh painted no less than 27 self-portraits. He often could not afford models so he

Paul Gauguin

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec



Stedelijk Museum

On the first floor there is a selection of paintings by Van Gogh. They are exhibited in chronological order to give an overview of the main developments in his oeuvre. Unfortunately, the drawings and letters are not on permanent display as they are too sensitive to light. Works from the collection of 19th-century art are on show on the ground and third floors.

Museumplein

The second floor houses changing presentations of drawings and graphic art, as well as a study area where visitors can view the reserve collection and find out more about Van Gogh and the art of his century. The location of individual works may change from time to time. Please ask at the information desk for questions about the current displays.

The entrance to the Van Gogh Museum is at Paulus Potterstraat, number 7. The museum can be reached with trams 2 and 5 from Central Station. The museum is easily accessible for the disabled. All floors can be reached by lift, wheelchairs and pushchairs are available free of charge.

Postal address and telephone numbers

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Opening hours

museum daily 10–18
ticket office daily 10–17.30
shop daily 10–17.45
restaurant daily 10–17.30
library Museumplein 4
Mon to Fri 10–12.45 and 13.30–17

Entrance prices

adults f 15.50 (€ 7.03)
0 to 12 years of age Free of charge
13 to 17 years of age f 5 (€ 2.27)
School parties free of charge on weekdays if admission is applied for in advance.

Rules of the House

Works of art can easily be damaged so please keep your distance and observe or do not touch them. You are not allowed to take photographs, to film, or to make audio or video recordings. Backpacks and umbrellas may not be taken in the museum and must be handed in at the cloakroom. Smoking is prohibited throughout the entire building.

Audiotour/Guided tours

Individual audio-guided tours are available for him (f 8.50 | 3.86), children (f 6.00 | 2.72). Group tours can be arranged but must be reserved by phone in advance.

Study facilities

There is a study area on the second floor of the museum. Here you can find more information on Van Gogh and the 19th century, provided by books and computers which give access to the museum's website. There is also an educational presentation in which Van Gogh's method of work is explained in detail. Those works of art which are not on show in the main-floor displays are normally on show in the 'open store'.

www.vangoghmuseum.nl

History of the collection

The origins of the collection stretch back to Van Gogh himself and to his family. During his career Van Gogh relied on financial support from his brother Theo who was an art dealer. After Van Gogh's death, in July 1890, Theo owned most of Vincent's works. Theo himself died just six months later and responsibility for the stewardship of this collection passed first to his widow, Johanna van Gogh-Bonger (1862-1925) and then to her son Vincent Willem van Gogh (1890–1978). In 1962 the works which still remained in the family collection were purchased by the newly established Vincent van Gogh Foundation. The funds were provided by the Dutch state which also constructed the museum building designed by the Dutch architect Gerrit Rietveld and his partners. The Van Gogh Museum first opened in 1973.

The Van Gogh Museum aims to provide a rich overview of the art of Van Gogh and the century in which he lived. Alongside the core collections on permanent loan from the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, the Museum now presents a broad range of paintings, graphic art and sculpture from the period c. 1840–1920 including displays of Realism, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism as well as Salon and Symbolist art. Many of these works are by artists Van Gogh admired, including progressive contemporaries like Paul Gauguin and Georges Seurat, but also traditional painters such as Ary Scheffer. The collection is still growing and numerous works have been purchased, donated or lent to the museum in recent years.